

Doctrine of Repentance Defined

1. In the early 1970's, a young man stood on a street corner of Chicago and pointed a finger at people who passed by. He shouted one word at them: REPENT! REPENT!
2. As the people hurried by, there were looks of concern and confusion. What did the man mean? Repent? Of what?
3. In religious terms, we might sense what was happening. For centuries, the church has been calling upon people to repent.
4. Historically, the church has defined the word to mean, "to change one's mind" and, "to feel sorrow for sin." Today, the word has been reduced to mean nothing more than *"faith."*
5. However, it is now obvious that the simple definitions do not go far enough. The behavior of the professing church does not match its belief. Perhaps, in the words of Augustine, *"we need to repent of our repentance."*
6. Charles Allen has written that, *"It is so much easier to whittle God down to our size instead of repenting, changing our way of living, and being Godly ourselves."*
7. From the life of David comes an example of a man who truly repented of his great sins and found favor with God and with man once more.
8. We can be inspired and challenged by David. We must confess that we too are great sinners. Our sin is compounded by the fact that so often our repentance is silly, superficial, simplistic, and false. The problem with the counterfeit is that it is so close to the real thing, but it is not.
9. It is possible to embrace a counterfeit form of repentance in the name of religion.
10. Once it was easy for the church to recognize counterfeit repentance. The Reformation began, in part, to protest the selling of indulgences.
11. Now, time has passed and the Protestant church finds itself guilty of indulgences. We do not sell the gospel, we simply cheapen it with theological concepts such as the carnal Christian doctrine which says it does not matter how a person lives, they are just backslidden, not unconverted.
12. We tell each other not to judge, but the Bible tells us that the Church must judge righteous judgment.
13. The Church must mark those who cause division. The church must remove the splinter in the brother's eye. The Church must rebuke before all those who sin. The Church must cut off the offensive hand and pluck out the offending eye. Sin must be dealt with radically.

14. In short, the Church must remind itself not to indulge in sin but to find a way to forsake it.
15. The Biblical way is through repentance. But what is true repentance?
16. One way to answer that question is to draw a comparison and contrast between counterfeit repentance and evangelical repentance.